

An Ear to the Ground

By Walt Bones, South Dakota Secretary of Agriculture

Make Your Voice Heard

Monday, November 19, 2012

After enduring one of the most volatile growing seasons in history, it is time for us in agriculture to step back and evaluate our year and plan on where our farms and ranches are headed next year. A lot of this soul searching is done at our commodity group and farm organization's annual meetings.

Each year, we gather with our peers and at a grass root's level, analyze and bring policy resolutions forward. Sometimes these resolutions are approved at the local and State levels and are submitted for national consideration. We have had good local ideas become part of a Federal Farm Bill. Regardless of where the discussion leads, it is the discussion and the input that is important.

We here in South Dakota embrace local (grass roots) control. There are 66 counties, 913 townships, 123 State Boards and Commissions plus all the other local and statewide leadership positions that are available and filled by producers and citizens. It seems logical to me that with our small population, South Dakota has a higher percentage of its population involved in the policy-making process than any other State in the U.S.

I would encourage all of you to get involved. Make your ideas and thoughts on the issues known. You can make a difference. As the saying goes, "the world is run by those that show up" or "if you are not at the table, you are probably on the menu". Never has that been so true.

That is the ongoing role of the Ag Policy division here at the South Dakota Department of Agriculture. We are constantly advocating for our farmers, ranchers and processors so that they can do what they do so well. There is not a week that goes by that we are not commenting on policy proposals out of Washington, D.C., or helping a constituent. We have excellent relationships with our Congressional delegations. They, too, are looking for input into issues that are relevant to our producers.

As we enter this Holiday season, let's remember that our State's greatest blessing is the people that live here. Each and every one of you contribute to make this State what it is. We need your input. We need to hear your thoughts and ideas. If you are not a member, please join and support the process that serves you all so well.

I wish you all a very blessed Thanksgiving!

Walt

